

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ISTANBUL 1226

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, AV, TU
SUBJ: TURKISH AIRLINES STRIKE

SUMMARY: AIRLINE WORKERS' STRIKE IN ISTANBUL HAS GROUNDED
ALL TURKISH AIRLINES (THY) FLIGHTS. PROSPECTS SEEM GOOD FOR
EARLY SETTLEMENT. FOREIGN AAIRLINE OPERATIONS IN TURKEY NOT
AFFECTED. END SUMMARY

1. AIRLINE WORKERS UNION (HAVA-IS) WENT ON STRIKE LAST
NIGHT AGAINST GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED TURKISH AIRLINES (THY)
AT ISTANBUL'S YESILKOY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. AT THIS
POINT, ONLY 2,700 WORKERS AT ISTANBUL AIRPORT ARE AFFECTED.
THY TELLS US, HOWEVER, THAT EVEN THOUGH HAVE-IS MEMBERS AT
OTHER THY WORK SITES IN ISTANBUL (TICKET OFFICES, ETC.) AND
AT AIRPORTS IN OTHER PARTS OF TURKEY REMAIN ON JOB, ALL THY
FLIGHTS ARE GROUNDED SINCE MOST FLIGHTS ORIGINATE FROM
ISTANBUL AND ALMOST ALL AIRCRAFT SERVICING IS DONE HERE.
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MANAGERS OF SEVERAL FOREIGN AIRLINES INFORM CONGEN THAT
THEIR OPERATIONS SO FAR ARE NOT AFFECTED BY STRIKE.

2. HAVA-IS TOOK STRIKE VOTE ON APRIL 22 FOLLOWING BREAKDOWN
IN SEVEN MONTH LONG NEGOTIATIONS WITH THY MANAGEMENT OVER NEW
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CONTRACT. STRIKE BEGAN AT 11 P.M.
APRIL 23. THY/HAVA-IS NEGOTIATIONS WERE BELIEVED BERY CLOSE

TO SETTLEMENT, AND STRIKE TOOK MANY IN AIRLINE INDUSTRY BY SURPRISE. THY GENERAL MANAGER, SALAHATTIN BABUROGLU, STATED TO PRESS THAT COMPANY CANNOT MEET UNION'S DEMANDS WHICH INCLUDE 100 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE. MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION REPORTEDLY REJECTED THIS WAGE HIKE AS INFLATIONARY. THY ALSO CLAIMS THAT COMPANY IS BURDENED WITH SUPERNUMERARY EMPLOYEES WHOSE JOBS MAY ALSO BE AT ISSUE IN NEGOTIATIONS. BABUROGLU AND ASSISTANT THY MANAGER ARE IN ANKARA TODAY, PRESUMABLY REVIEWING MANAGEMENT POSITION WITH GOVERNMENT AND THY BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

3. MOST PEOPLE WE HAVE TALKED TO WITH AIRLINES BELIEVE PROSPECTS FOR EARLY SETTLEMENT ARE GOOD AND DO NOT EXPECT STRIKE TO LAST LONG -- PERHAPS COUPLE OF DAYS. IF STRIKE CONTINUES, UNION OFFICIALS STATE THAT IT WILL BE EXTENDED TO OTHER THY WORK SITES WHERE REMAINING 3,000 HAVA-IS MEMBERS EMPLOYED. ALTHOUGH THIS HAS RARELY HAPPENED IN PAST, ONE FOREIGN AIRLINE MANAGER COULD NOT DISCOUNT POSSIBILITY THAT UNION REPRESENTING EMPLOYEES OF HANDLING AGENCY, WHICH PROVIDES SERVICES TO ALL BUT TWO OF SMALLER FOREIGN AIRLINES AT YESILKOY, WOULD STAGE SYMPATHY STRIKE IF THY DISPUTE PROLONGED.

4. IN EVENT SETTLEMENT NOT QUICKLY REACHED, GOT COULD ISSUE INJUNCTION FOR RETURN TO WORK. DEMIREL GOVERNMENT DID THIS LAST YEAR WHEN HAVA-IS STRUCK FOR ALLEGED NON-COMPLIANCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH OLD CONTRACT. HOWEVER, SUPREME ADMINISTRATIVE COURT (DANISTAY) RULED SUCH ACTION UNWARRANTED SINCE THY STRIKE DID NOT THREATEN PUBLIC HEALTH OR NATIONAL SECURITY. ECEVIT GOVERNMENT, WITH ITS ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO RESPECT SUCH COURT DECISIONS, MAY BE RELUCTANT TO ORDER RETURN TO WORK.

5. COMMENT: PRIME MINISTER, DESPITE HIS CONCERN FOR INFLATIONARY WAGE AGREEMENT, MAY FEEL UNDER SOME POLITICAL PRESSURE TO MAKE CONCESSIONS TO HAVA-IS. HAVA-IS IS MEMBER OF "SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC" GROUP IN TURK-IS, TURKEY'S LARGEST LABOR CONFEDERATION AND THESE "SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC" UNIONS STRONGLY SUPPORTED ECEVIT'S REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY (RPP) IN LAST YEAR'S ELECTIONS. AT LEAST ONE OTHER MEMBER OF "SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC" GROUP, PETROLEUM WORKERS (PETROL-IS), FOUND THAT THIS DID NOT COUNT FOR MUCH WHEN GOT IN PERSON OF, OF ALL PEOPLE, LIBERAL MINISTER OF ENERGY, DENIZ BAYKAL, CAME DOWN HARD ON SIDE OF MANAGEMENT DURING LABOR DISPUTE IN FEBRUARY (ISTANBUL 441). HOWEVER, SINCE THIS, ECEVIT GOVERNMENT HAS HAD SERIOUS DIFFERENCES WITH OTHER WING OF ITS TRADE UNION SUPPORT, DISK LABOR CONFEDERATION (ANKARA 2318), AND PRIME MINISTER MAY NOW THINK TWICE BEFORE GETTING INTO CONFRONTATION WITH HIS TURK-IS SUPPORTERS.

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